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ABSTRACT

Five positions on the nature and purpose of basic studies in the college curriculum are considered. The five positions are summarized as follows: (1) to develop essential skills; (2) to introduce students to disciplines of knowledge; (3) to introduce students to the basic modes of thinking or ways of knowing; (4) to develop understanding and appreciation of seminal ideas, events, and products of human culture; and (5) to engage students in the processing of meaningful learning. These positions are also analyzed in terms of their focus on content, teaching, learning, governance, and utilization. Philosophical and educational assumptions about the five positions are also discussed with attention to mission and goals, views of knowledge, views of teaching and learning, and value differences. Compatibility of the five positions are also addressed. Seven suggestions concerning the issues of organizational support for basic studies programs are offered, including: formal adoption of curriculum design and rationale for the basic studies program; and an on-going program review process. Finally, five suggestions concerning provision of support for instructional processes within basic studies programs are presented that include adequate time and resources and consultation services. (SW)

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DIFFERING VIEWS OF BASIC STUDIES CURRICULA

by

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DIFFERING VIEWS OF BASIC STUDIES CURRICULA

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Introduction

Most colleges and universities include within their curricula a core element which is a common requirement for all students. This common requirement, which has carried a variety of designations, and which may be tightly or loosely defined and prescribed, will be referred to here as 'basic studies.' Although this core component is nearly universal, conceptualizations about its aims and composition span a wide spectrum, even within a single institution; nevertheless, a limited number of fundamental positions about the nature and purposes of basic studies can be identified. These positions are not categorical in the sense that acceptance of one implies rejection of the other four. The difference lies in the assignment of priority to one or another of several generally acknowledged aims of general education. These differences in priority and emphasis actually represent extensive differences in philosophical and educational assumptions which are not usually understood and clarified in debate over basic studies programs or easily or satisfactorily accommodated in the political and practical compromises that emerge from these debates. The intent here is to contribute some impetus to the exploration of educational and philosophical beliefs and assumptions as basic studies programs are considered.

In this paper five positions about the nature and purpose of basic studies are proposed. These positions were derived from discussions during the experience of curriculum revision at one university, but analysis of other significant basic studies programs or proposals supports their validity (Gaff, 1980; Boyer and Levine, 1982; Keller, 1982); therefore, it is assumed that these positions are representative of academic opinion generally; although no claim is made, however, that these positions are comprehensive of all that basic studies might be conceived to be. In Part 2 of

this paper, these five positions are defined in terms of their major claims concerning curriculum emphasis and their rationales and implicit problems are discussed. In Part 3 the positions are analyzed in terms of their focus on essential elements of education (content, teaching, learning, governance, and utilization). In Part 4, these five positions are compared and contrasted in terms of philosphical and curriculum concepts. In Part 5 the issue of compatibility of these five sections is considered from the perspectives of logic and practicality. In the final section some suggestions are offered concerning the governance of basic studies curricula and programs based upon implications of the foregoing analysis.

The Five Positions

These five positions can be summarized in terms of their major curriculum emphasis for basic studies programs, as follows: (I) to develop essential skills, (II) to introduce students to the established disciplines of knowledge, (III) to introduce students to the basic modes of thinking or ways of knowing, (IV) to develop understanding and appreciation of seminal ideas, events and products of human culture, and (V) to engage students in the process of significant, meaningful learning. The differences among these positions are of course much more complex than their characterization in terms of curriculum emphasis implies. No claim is being made that these positions, considered singly, will differentiate between the views of individual persons or between particular curricular proposals. It may well be that differing opinions about basic studies programs can be analyzed and understood as differences in the degree to which each of these positions is accepted and assigned priority.

Position I - Essential skills. The development of essential skills is usually a component of core curricula even of institutions which are highly selective in their admissions; however, it is seldom adopted as the sole purpose of a basic studies pro-

gram. Its inclusion is defended on the basis of the obvious need for sophisticated intellectual skills within a complex, industrial society. Typically included among the skills to be developed are one or more of the following: written composition, oral communication (both of these in the national language), reading and/or oral communication in a second language, mathematical systems and applications, study and reference skills, reasoning and logic, computer literacy, and some notion of scientific method or empirical inquiry. Points of issue concerning the skills dimension of basic studies programs center on which skills should be included, how skills instruction will be delivered, what levels of performance students should achieve before they have satisfied this requirement, and how to make accomodations for the variable characteristics of entering students.

Position II - Introduction to the disciplines. This position is usually defended on the basis of claims that the academic disciplines are the primary vehicles for the creation and preservation of human knowledge, that the only legitimate source of content for curriculum is disciplined knowledge (Phenix, 1962), and that an introduction to the structure of the disciplines is critical for access to that knowledge. Although this position is commonly recognized in the design of basic studies programs, several difficult issues are inherent. Since students cannot usually take courses in all disciplines, some basis and some mechanism must be found to distribute student selection over a limited number of disciplines--a necessity which begs the question of how to conceptualize breadth of curriculum coverage and which also complicates the political maneuvering involved during the process of curriculum determination. Other issues involve content coverage, teaching methodology, and adaptation to learner characteristics. Questions frequently raised about disciplinary courses include: What information and ideas should be selected for inclusion in an introductory course? Should a course be a broad factual survey or a more carefully

tailored introduction to the essential structure of the discipline? How should content be presented so that it becomes personal knowledge for the learners? Should the same course be required of potential majors as well as non-majors within a given discipline?

Position III - Ways of knowing. The position that basic studies should introduce students to all or most all of the modes of thinking (or ways or knowing) of the human mind--the third perspective--is justified on the basis of the following assumptions: (a) that ways of knowing and thinking are essentially different in the sciences, in the arts, in mathematics, in religion, in interpersonal affairs, etc.; (b) that college students should experience a broad spectrum of learning and knowledge prior to their selection of a major (an assumption basic also to positions two and four); (c) that the most efficient way to assure breadth of curriculum coverage is to introduce students to these various modes of thinking; and (d) that introduction to the academic disciplines does not define nor does it adequately address the spectrum of mental functioning to provide that breadth (Eisner, 1985). Issues that arise in relation to this position are the identification and definition of these modes of thinking; whether educational institutions should assume responsibility for developing all of these modes and in what order of priority; and the identification of effective means for teaching and learning these ways of thinking.

Position IV - Cultural heritage. The fourth position proposes that basic studies programs should acquaint students with and develop appreciation for the most valued and influential ideas, thinkers, occurrences, and accomplishments of human civilization. Adherents of this position assume that the best way to preserve and utilize the vast richness of human culture is to impart it to succeeding generations, and they remind us that this has always been the role of the liberal arts curriculum of the colleges. Which ideas and accomplishments to include or exclude and the ensuing

practical issue of how to decide on the content of the curriculum are perpetual problems for this position. Another issue is the utilization of this knowledge vs. the broad claims for its utility espoused by its proponents. Considerations of teaching methodology and of adaptation to individual differences in learner's backgrounds and skills are also not usually addressed by this position.

Position V - Meaningful learning. The fifth view, one that emerged in the dialogue on basic studies curriculum revision within one particular institution, is not traditional nor is it perhaps very widely accepted; it focuses less on content inclusion than on the qualitative aspects of the teaching and learning interactions within the curriculum. Stated briefly it maintains that a basic studies program is truly 'educative' if it promotes comprehension and retention of organized frameworks of knowledge and the utilization of these frameworks to understand and interpret experience in a number of spheres of living. Among the assumptions basic to this position are: (a) that there is a clear distinction between rote learning and meaningful learning, (b) that rote leaning impedes meaningful learning and in itself has limited applicability, and (c) that selection or omission of particular bodies of content is not critical to the educative value of the curriculum as long as some breadth of learning is ensured (Ausubel, et. al., 1978). Issues implicit in this position are how to ensure that meaningful learning occurs in any educational setting and how content for the curriculum shall be selected to assure reasonable relevance and breadth of learning.

Educational Emphasis

Another way to consider the differences between these five positions is to to view them in relation to the essential elements of education. Any educational situation where one group of people assumes responsibility for the learning of another

group contains the elements of teaching, learning, content (or subject matter), governance, (Gowin, 1982) and ideas about the ultimate utilization of learnings. Whether or not an educator (in this case one who feels responsibility for the learning of others) has well developed theories concerning teaching, learning, content, governance, and utilizations of learning, his actions and decisions will be guided by some notions concerning each of these elements. Each of the five positions on basic studies curricula identified above represents a particular emphasis on one of these elements in relation to the other four. For some educators, this is a studied and deliberate ordering of priorities based upon informed theories of education, philosophy, psychology, and organizations. But many (perhaps the majority) of the participants in basic studies curriculum debates typically present reasoned views concerning one or two of these elements (e.g., content) while their views on the other components reflect unanalyzed assumptions which may be inconsistent with defensible educational, philosophical, or psychological theory.

The essential skills position (Position I) reflects a primary concern for utilization of learnings. According to Broudy's classification of uses of learning as either replicative, applicative, interpretive, and associative (Broudy, 1974), the focus of this position is on skills which will be used applicatively. As an example, arguments both for and against the development of competence in a second language center their arguments on application: opponents cite evidence that the learnings are never used; proponents give evidence that the need and value for such competence is highly practical and economically rewarding. Serious advocates of skills within basic studies curricula have begun to deal systematically with issues of content (for example, emphasis on the writing process in composition courses), teaching, learning, and even governance (e.g., some of the 'writing across the curriculum proposals' or mastery-learning applied to skills courses) for that part of the curriculum focused

on skills. Position I does not deal, obviously, with the issue of content for the basic studies currriculum as a whole, and its provision for teaching, learning, and governance is more supplementary than direct.

Three of the positions, Positions II, (introduction to the disciplines), III (ways of knowing), and IV (cultural heritage) are essentially concerned with content (subject matter), the differences among these three positions lying partly in how subject matter is conceived (an issue discussed below under 'Philosophical and educational assumptions'), and partly in whether emphasis is placed on sources of content, means of selecting content, or on breadth of coverage. Position II maintains that the only legitimate source of content is from the disciplines (Phenix, 1962), and that the essential structure of the disciplines guides the selection of content (Schwab, 1962). Breadth of coverage of content is not directly addressed, unless students may be introduced to all disciplines. For those espousing this position who focus on the structure of the disciplines, teaching and learning are conceived within the metaphor of the discipline: a student learns best by acting as an academic scholar, by addressing his questions, and using his methods to discover and verify for oneself knowledge extant within the discipline. Provision is made for governance in this position through the existing organizational units of most colleges and universities--academic departments. Many advocates of this position hope that learnings will be utilized applicatively through further, specialized study of the discipline; however, the major expectation is that learnings will be used to interpret experience and to interpret ideas learned subsequently. Perhaps the strength of the introduction to the disciplines position (Position II) lies in the fact that it provides existing conceptualizations and/or mechanisms covering each of the essential elements of education.

The Ways of Knowing Position (Position III) represents a proposal for dealing with the issue of breadth of content, but it leaves may questions unanswered concerning the selection of content, about teaching and learning, about governance, and about the utilization of learnings. It is not clear that study within a given discipline or witin a single course develops one and only one way of knowing; nor is it clear that there are any guidelines for education that will result in aesthetic, spiritual, interpersonal, etc., modes of thinking and knowing (Eisner, 1985). Writers advocating this position assume that knowledge will be used both applicatively and interpretatively—although assocative uses of learning would be expected also. Nevertheless, whether a way of knowing developed within a college course in relation to specific content will transfer to other relevant situations is an unresolved issue.

Position IV, the cultural heritage position, holds that the source of content should be the major events, ideas, and conditions that have shaped Western civilization, and it assumes that traditional divisions of the liberal arts curriculum will provide sufficient breadth of content; but this position usually doesn't deal effectively with the issue of content selection. Views about what should be included are typically the opinion of a single writer or advocate; seldom is a basis provided for choosing between conflicting claims about what is most important. Traditional college and university teaching methods (lecture method, seminar, tutorial, and Socratic dialogue) are assumed to do nicely for the processes of teaching and learning. Similarly, typical patterns of university administration, with much emphasis on academic freedom and the indvidual perogative of professors, account for the governance of education. The expectation of this position seems to be that learnings will be used associatively; certainly there is resistance to the idea that learnings from basic studies curricula must be of direct practical applicability.

Position V obviously represents a primary concern for learning with a secondary, instrumental focus on teaching. Although the student must assume responsibility for his own learning, teaching and learning are seen as inseparably linked (Gowin, 1982). Basic tenets of this position are that systematic coverage of any framework or taxonomy of knowledge is not as important as learning how to learn (Gowin and Novak, 1985); that the ability to learn will be used applicatively throughout life; and that the products of learning (concepts, knowledge claims, and value claims) will be used both interpretively (to interpret experience) and applicatively (to solve problems). In its basic form this position makes no systematic provision for governance. This poses a problem, because traditional academic governance rewards scholarly activity, not teaching, and any attempts to bring about 'meaningful learning' require considerable time for and expertise in curriculum analysis, presentation of learning tasks, testing, and other aspects of teaching.

Philosophical and Educational Assumptions

Although these positions have been presented in terms of differences of curriculum emphasis, and in terms of emphasis placed on the elements of education, the essential differences are much deeper. Arguments about what should be taught and how it should be selected and organized often mask fundamentally differing assumptions about the societal mission and educational goals of institutions; about the nature of knowledge; about learning and teaching; and about values. Even individuals who agree in their views about the curriculum emphasis of basic studies programs may disagree in their beliefs on these issues; nevertheless, there will be greater commonality of agreement among advocates of the same position than there will be in a mixed group of advocates of differing positions. Analysis of inherent belief structures will shed further light on differences between these five positions.

Mission and goals. Whether the mission of a post-secondary institution is professional, technical, or liberal arts education, the basic studies component represents the dimension of breadth in curriculum. The role of basic studies is almost always to establish a broad foundation for later, more specialized learning; therefore, it seems there would naturally be agreement at the most general level on the educational goals of basic studies. Indeed statements of goals across institutions do appear very similar; they are usually stated broadly in language that mentions or implies at least three of the positions identified here, and differences in emphasis and priorities often cannot be discerned by examining goal statements alone. Most likely there is a relationship between institutional mission and curriculum emphasis: it seems reasonable to expect that technical institutions would tend to stress essential skills (Position I) to a greater degree, that institutions focusing on professional and disciplinary specialization would tend to stress introduction to academic disciplines (Position II), and liberal arts colleges may tend to stress cultural and intellectual heritage (Position IV), although Positions III and V would certainly be compatible with a liberal arts mission.

Views of knowledge. Epistomological differences between the five positions are more fundamental than differences concerning educational missions and goals. Using the language of curriculum, the first four of these positions focus on the content of the curriculum, with Positions I emphasizing skills and Positions II, III, and IV emphasizing knowledge. Position V ostensibly emphasizes instructional methodology, but it will be argued that it is also very much concerned with knowledge as content, although in this position, knowledge and content are viewed in a somewhat different light.

The distinction between skills and content (between Position I as opposed to Positions II, III, and IV) assumes a differentiation between knowing how and knowing

that—for example, between knowing how to write a good essay versus knowing that the Earth is a sphere. Yet there is no clear demarcation between skills and content. For one thing, knowledge components are always involved in the ability to perform skills, even in the learning and execution of psychomotor skills. The focus of the essential skills position is that students learn to the point of application such things as symbolic systems for representation, and thinking and communication processes.

The issue of content vs. skills, or knowledge vs. process, is central to an understanding of the epistomological differences among Positions II, III, IV, and V. Many philosophers argue that the distinction between knowing how and knowing that (skills vs. knowledge) is a false one. Scheffler (1965), for example, claims that knowing that 'X is true' reduces at base to knowing how to demonstrate that 'X is true.' Current epistomological opinion is that any theory or knowledge claim can be demonstrated to be false, or refuted (Phillips, 1985), but it can never be demonstrated conclusively to be true—it can only be defended by marshaling good reasons on its behalf (Weimar, 1979). Therefore, knowing the concept 'sphere' implies the ability to present or identify examples and non-examples of spheres and explain why these examples do or do not qualify; and knowing that the earth is a sphere implies the ability to produce convincing supporting arguments and evidence (Gagne and Briggs, 1974; Gowin and Novak, 1985). Position V, emphasizing meaningful learning, advocates that all learning of what are referred to as 'knowledge claims' be carried to just this point or rational justification, the term 'knowledge claims' reflecting both the tentative nature of knowledge and the importance of evidence and argument to those claims (Gowin, 1982).

Views of knowledge consistent with Scheffler (1965), Steven Toulman, Gowin (1982) and others are usually accepted by serious curriculum writers who espouse Positions II (introduction to the disciplines), III (introduction to ways of knowing), as

well as Position V. However, many academicians who assign highest priority to the introduction to the disciplines (Position II) seem to view knowledge as static—as sets of statements which can be learned and retained as if they were facts. Advocates of Position IV (the cultural heritage position), also, frequently view knowledge as immutable and eternally true. The content of the curriculum is often seen as a collection of great ideas (Hutchins) and great human accomplishments which retain their truth value and importance despite subsequent thought, events and conditions in the world. In summary, the assumptions about knowledge underlying Position IV tend to be idealist; whereas assumptions about knowledge underlying positions II, III and V tend to flow from modern empiricism and rationalism. However, many faculty members who insist that introdution to the disciplines should receive the highest priority in basic studies seem to resemble idealists in their statements about knowledge and the content of the curriculum. The actual difference, however, is not usually epistomological, but in views about how knowledge is learned or acquired.

Views of teaching and learning. Despite the strong claims to legitimacy of educational and psychological theories of teaching, learning and schooling, many university and college level educators tend to discount educational theory and rely instead upon their intuitions or upon common-sense notions of teaching and learning. Those who give priority to Position IV, (cultural heritage) and many of those who espouse Position II (introduction to the disciplines) and Position I (essential skills) tend to reflect views of learning drawn from a mixture of IXth Century faculty psychology and XXth Century behaviorism. Many advocates of Position II who focus on the structure of the academic disciplines and who view knowledge from the viewpoint of modern empiricism see teaching and learning as active and interactive processes. For these writers, methods of learning for the novitiate are taken to be the same as methods of investigation for the scholar (particularly the scientist).

Position V goes beyond this position in attempting to develop and validate pedagogical theory and methods to facilitate and enhance meaningful learning (Gowin and Novak, 1985). Writers representing Position III, may recognize as valid the rational empiricism of the meaningful learning position, but they see this as only one way of knowing. However, no significant theories of pedagogy have emerged yet from scholars representing this position to guide curriculum workers who might aim to bring about a range of ways of knowing.

Value differences. Values systems can be characterized in terms of their beliefs about the ultimate justification of what is good, just, true, or important. Authority (usually conceived and justified as divine authority), society (which might be conceived broadly as mankind, or narrowly as nation or group; as democratic and egalitarian, or as heirarchical and elitist), knowledge, eternal truth and the individual are the usual candidates as bases for the ultimate justification of value.

Position II (introduction to the disciplines) values knowledge more highly than the individual or society; and usually does not accept any notion of eternal truth or of authority (divine or human). The source of ultimate good for Position III (ways of knowing) would seem to be the individual; the various ways themselves may perhaps be construed as eternal truths, but belief in the evolution of human capabilities would seem to be incompatible with that notion. Among advocates of Position IV (cultural heritage) may be found educators who base their sense of the ultimate good upon divine authority (religious educators), educators who believe in eternal truth (idealists), and those who base their sense of value on the traditions of society (usually conceived as the nation or the group).

Advocates of Position I (essential skills) almost invariably draw their justification of curriculum choices from a sense of the needs of society. One might argue that concern for the individual dominates their thinking, for their concern is with

the individual learner's acquisition of skills. But an individual is 'adequately educated' when he or she has the skills that allow him to function well within society and adapt to its changing needs. The most logical candidates as sources of ultimate good for the meaningful learning position (Position V) are society and the individual. Since there is limited concern for the acquisition of specific content, one might argue that concern for the individual is the basic value; however, the ability to learn—particularly with emphasis on receptive learning--is seen as valuable because it is adaptive, which implies a concern for the survival of man as species and for society. Perhaps there is room in this position for both humanists and collectivists.

Compatibility of the five positions

None of these five positions can be ignored or omitted from consideration in designing basic studies programs. Position I may receive more or less emphasis, depending upon levels of ability and performance of incoming student populations. However, skill learnings cannot be ignored because of the high level of skill development needed to enter professional, technical and leadership roles in business, industry, and in social service—levels of skill that cannot be developed adequately within the time-frame or universal, compulsory context of public school attendance.

Position II cannot be discounted because the fundamental concepts and theories of the disciplines are the major source of ideas for man's understanding of the world. One criterion for judging the strength of basic studies programs must be whether graduates emerge having acquired a large store of these basic concepts. This does not mean, however, that courses within a basic studies program must be based upon introductory study of discreet disciplines.

Position III (Ways of Knowing) represents an important advance in thinking about breadth of knowledge--about the spectrum of human mental capabilities. As such, it offers a possible framework for the horizonal dimension of the basic studies curriculum.

Position IV (cultural heritage) flows from the acculturation needs of mankind. The need to school succeeding generations in the major ideas and accomplishments of the past will always remain as will the debate over which ideas and accomplishments should be included. To say that the issue can have no final resolution does not mean that the debate must not continue.

Position V is a claim that learning be meaningful in any context. Clearly no one would contradict this aim The real issue is the degree to which meaningful learning might be curtailed by serving the goals of the other positions. Nevertheless, it clearly has legitimacy as an important criterion of basic studies programs.

Having concluded that all of these positions and their essential aims remain in consideration, we must inquire about the degree of compatibility between them, or stated negatively, whether there are inherent contradictions. The only inherent conflict between Position I and the other four positions flows from the fact that courses and/or course activities devoted to skill development require time and resources and are clearly in competition for 'curriculum space'. Relative priority for skill development as opposed to acquisition of content is a question of values and therefore always a potential source of disagreement. Skill development need not be separated from the learning of content; indeed, Positions III and V recognize that it is both possible and desirable to integrate skill learning with meaningful content learning. However, this kind of integration may not be a sufficient condition for adequate development of processing and communication skills. For many students sufficient learning guidance for skill development will only occur in courses that

hold the student accountable for successful application of just those kinds of process learnings. In general, assigning high priority to Positions III and/or V implies assignment of lower priority to skill development through separate courses. The logic of Positions II and IV, on the other hand, is to assign only as much space to skill development as necessary, and to address skill learning through separate courses or by raising entry requirements.

To the extent that a person values the acquisition of the products of knowledge as opposed to the processes of knowing, Positions II (introduction to the disciplines) and Position IV (cultural heritage) will be viewed as conflicting with Positions III and V. If knowledge is viewed as product, more is better, and emphasis on skills or process is downplayed. Positions II, III, IV, and V, are not incompatible, however, if knowledge is viewed as tentative, evolving, and dependent upon processes of discovery and validation both for the naive learner and for the disciplines. Strong advocates of Position IV are less likely to adopt such a process-centered view of knowledge, and are most frequently at odds with adherents of Positions III and V. Adopting a rational empiricist view of knowledge, however, need not imply that Position II be sacrificed. The necessity of selectivity in curriculum development must always be recognized, but so also must the need to choose learnings of greatest cultural significance. Such selectivity involves value choices. Since there can be no 'answer' to what should be included in the curriculum, it is essential that dialogue and debate on such issues continue throughout the existence of a curriculum. The issue should be, then, not one of how to conclude which learnings should be in the curriculum, but one of establishing a curriculum-development process--some way to support and promote dialogue and deliberation and to ensure regular and orderly processes of change and review.

Position III (ways of knowing) presents a contradition to Positions II and IV if one insists that institutional programs should deliberately foster the development of all ways of knowing. Since Position II recognizes only content from the established disciplines as legitimate curriculum content, resistance to learning experiences fostering, for example, spiritual and interpersonal knowing is easily predicted. Response of educators representing the cultural heritage position would be similar, since Position III represents a break from established liberal arts traditions. Position V is not inherently in conflict with any of the other positions, however, implied lack of concern about the inclusion of specific curriculum content invites criticism from educators in Positions II and IV who are very sensitive about this issue. Disagreements may also arise between proponents of Positions III and V concerning how broadly the curriculum should be conceived.

In summary, the critical question for basic studies curriculum is not which one or two of these positions should receive priority; it is rather, which admixture of all of these positions one can reasonably hope to offer within the context of a particular institution, at a given time, in order to realize the essential thrust of each. There are two major obstacles that must be dealt with in order to reach this goal. First it must be recognized that there are difficult conceptual and practical problems to solve in order to realize the intent of several of these positions. The ways of knowing position (III) is beset with both theoretical and practical issues, chief among which must be whether there are in fact distinctly different ways of knowing, how these interface with knowing and thinking within traditional domains of content, and whether courses and learning experiences can be designed which effectively develop the various modes of knowing. Positions I and V present issues that are more practical than conceptual in nature, since educational theory and technology is available to support effective teaching of skills and to achieve meaningful

learning (e.g., Gagne and Briggs, 1974; Gowin and Novak, 1985). Gaining acceptance of that body of knowledge within college and university communities and applying it to basic studies curricula and courses has been very difficult, however, in great part because of the persistence of traditional views (associated particularly with Positions IV and II) of how teaching and learning should proceed.

The second major obstacle is that programs with a strong bias towards one of these positions are frequently designed and implemented in ways that hinder or impede the accomplishment of the purposes represented in one or more of the others. Curricula designed by proponents of the cultural heritage position (IV) and/or the introduction to the disciplines position (II) may reflect broad coverage of the history, literature, philosophy, art and culture of human civilization and the mathematical, natural and social sciences, and they may be introduced and justified with verbal statements encompassing the educational aims of all of the five positions presented here; but if the epistomological notions undergirding these curricula and their implementation lean towards views of knowledge as a product which students can acquire by listening, reading and memorizing information, the aims of the meaningful learning (V), ways of knowing (III) and essential skills positions (I) will be in large measure thwarted.

Governance of Basic Studies Programs

The way to avoid these impasses is to recognize that the curriculum of basic studies programs, or any program, cannot be dealt with separately from the other elements of education--teaching, learning, and governance. Curriculum design is important in order to encourage selection of learnings representing the range of knowledge and traditions of human culture. But the curriculum as experienced by students is a result of interaction of a number of forces, such that the actual curri-

culum may differ markedly from the curriculum represented on paper. Without adequate provision for curriculum to be translated into course design, and for the development of teaching and learning activities appropriate for the achievement of the intended learnings, and without adequate governance to foster and support these processes, the difference between the ideal paper curriculum and the actual curriculum may become very wide.

The organizational structure of colleges and universities may be ideal to support research, scholarly inquiry and perhaps teaching and learning within specialized areas, but these structures do not provide the level of governance necessary to maintain basic studies programs that can legitimately serve the aims of all five of the positions presented here. This paper will conclude with a set of suggestions offered as a starting point to explore the issue of what would be necessary and sufficient support for the introductory, basic component of college and university education.

The first seven suggestions address the issue of organizational support for basic studies programs. (1) Curriculum design and rationale for the basic studies program must be developed by and formally adopted by the university community. (2) An on-going process of basic studies curriculum review and deliberation at regularly recurring intervals must be established both within and across administrative units and offices within the university community. (3) Existing administrative units and offices must be involved in curriculum-making relative to the basic studies program, and they must perceive the goals of this general program as important to the achievement of their more specialized goals. (4) A communication system should be established to inform the university community of curriculum making processes, the rationale and design of the curriculum, proposed changes, and evaluations of basic studies programs. (5) An additional administrative unit should be established with

responsibility for overseeing the process of curriculum review (point 2) and the communication system (point 3). The relationship of this administrative unit to existing units would of course need to be worked out. (6) Faculty contributions to basic studies curriculum-making and instruction must be generously rewarded within the university's tenure and promotion system. (7) The impact on basic studies curriculum must be considered in all university decision-making.

The following five suggestions are concerned with provision of support for instructional processes within basic studies programs: (8) Time and resources must be provided for curriculum deliberation and course design above and beyond that provided for departmentally-offered courses; such support would be especially necessary for interdisciplinary offerings or experimental courses. (9) Effective consultation and support services for curricular and instructional decision-making must be systematically provided by the institution. (10) Adequate resources, including appropriate faculty-student ratios, must be provided to implement the intended curriculum. (11) Provision should be made to extend and reinforce the development of thinking and communication skills in all appropriate basic studies courses. (12) Provision should be made to accommodate range of knowledge and ability of entering students wherever appropriate.

The analysis of the five positions on basic studies curriculum presented in this paper provides a starting point for thinking about basic studies curriculum proposals in terms of fundamental ideological assumptions. The validity of this analysis has not been tested against the writings and arguments of particular educators within specific curriculum deliberations. But analysis of this sort would appear useful as an impetus to infuse intellectual and ideological discussion into curriculum debates within university communities. Too often rhetoric is used as a tool for political advantage in university-wide curriculum decisions that are infrequent, singular oc-

currences. But curriculum deliberation needs to be on-going so that cogency of argument can be tested in forums that are both open and open-ended. The establishment of adequate governance is a necessary condition for orderly, rational, and on-going curriculum deliberation and decision-making processes, which are in turn necessary conditions for optimal realization of the broad range of educational goals represented by these differing views on basic studies curricula.

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